

Critical factors for a successful contract handover

To inspire confidence and spread knowledge, we have developed Bartlett Mitchell's recipe for success guides for workplace and contract catering. You can download other guides from our website www.bartlettmitchell.co.uk/category/expert-guides

Contract mobilisations can be stressful for clients and team members. By following our best practice guide you can remove the ambiguity and ensure a smooth and seamless handover.

There are many elements to ensure a successful handover, these are our top three.

1. The client must confirm in writing to the newly appointed incoming caterer the contact details of the outgoing caterer's operations manager (or director). Include your expectations of a professional handover and that courtesy should be extended to the incoming caterer.
2. Obtain written confirmation from the outgoing caterer of equipment that belongs to them. If equipment is going to be removed from site, the client needs to be notified in advance.
3. The incoming caterer should be on site to meet the new team within 24 hours of informing the team that the catering contractor has changed.



Planning and communication

It is the caterer's job to make the mobilisation of a new contract as easy and pain free as possible for the client. That is why the service is contracted out. To achieve success, we recommend a client agrees whom needs to be kept informed throughout the lead up period. We usually recommend a weekly update meeting or conference call with the client and the mobilisation team so they can keep each other apprised of progress and any potential developments. It is also very important that other facilities departments, such as security, cleaning and reception are informed of changes in their areas.

Maximum facilitation

It is important that the client tells the outgoing caterer that they are allowing access to the full facilities to the incoming caterer. Clients should expect the outgoing caterer to be professional throughout the mobilisation period. It's not unusual for the final invoice payment to be reliant upon this.

Contract caterers operate in clients' premises. The client funds the labour and caterers are guests in their building, it's important to remember the client is in the driving seat.

TUPE and full disclosure

Provide contact details of the outgoing caterer's HR contacts and operations manager to the incoming caterer. The incoming caterer needs to establish contact so the caterers can liaise in order to ensure an efficient handover of TUPE information.

It can be a very worrying time for team members when a contract changes hands. Within 24 hours of announcing the change of caterer, the team need reassurance about the security of their positions.

It is usual practice for the outgoing caterer to speak to the team first. They inform them that the contract will be managed by a new contractor. The team needs to know that TUPE will apply and what it means to them. The outgoing caterer can say that they have opportunities for team members in other parts of their business for those who want to remain with them. It's very important for the incoming caterer to meet with the catering team within 12-24 hours of this original announcement.

This is to ensure that the team:

- Feels secure
- Understands that their current role, terms and conditions are protected
- Is informed of the process
- Obtains an understanding of the new company
- Has an opportunity to have a face-to-face meeting with the new catering team.

The outgoing caterer must hand over the TUPE information (which may differ from the tendering information) to the incoming caterer. The accuracy of this TUPE information must be checked by the incoming caterer's HR team during the follow up one-to-one sessions with the catering team. This will ensure the TUPE information is accurate and confirmed by all three parties.

Site visits

As the client pays the salaries and the building costs it is not unusual, and is preferable for the incoming caterer to have several sessions with the team leading up to the contract change. This can include visits by the incoming caterer's mobilisation team, meetings, familiarisation and to organise the mobilisation.

Pre-opening training can also be useful. If it's possible to organise a session later on the Thursday before handover it's very helpful. All arrangements should be agreed by the caterers and require the client's approval and support.

The mobilisation team may base themselves on site during the handover. This is particularly useful during the week before the contract goes 'live' to better understand what is happening on-site, to keep track of tasks and liaise with clients about any upcoming hospitality events, and to receive deliveries.

To be ready for launch, food and equipment will be delivered to site by the incoming caterer before handover. It's important to agree a protocol for this between the incoming and outgoing caterer. The client can insist that the outgoing caterer facilitates this. Allocation of a space is helpful.

It is also helpful for key members of the existing TUPE-ing team to visit some of the incoming caterers' sites. This gives them an understanding of 'what was bought' - the caterer's style and the expectations created during the tendering process. They may also be asked to attend off-site training.

If there is an evening service on handover day, the handover needs to be very prompt, at an agreed upon time. Contracts usually end officially at midnight, at which point the employees transfer to the new company. It can be a little more complicated if the transfer occurs before the end of day, so ways around this, like reduced service and very efficient handover systems can be useful.

Handover

A typical handover weekend will involve a large mobilisation team coming to site. Their aim is to create a visual difference and set up the systems ready for the opening day.

It's important to establish if the equipment is owned by the client or the catering company. An up-to-date asset list will remove any misunderstanding, particularly if equipment or goods are to be removed by the outgoing caterer. The client must ask for a written list of what, if anything, will be removed from site. It also must be very clear if the stock is owned by the client or the outgoing caterer. Stock should be run down to minimal levels and the incoming caterer should have the choice of what stock, if any, they will be willing to take over from the outgoing caterer.

On handover day the outgoing and incoming caterer should both sign a document to agree that standards are acceptable to both parties. This includes stock levels, equipment, cleanliness, personal records and data.

Financial reconciliation

If there is a cashless system, it's very important that both the incoming and outgoing caterer audits and scrutinises the data. Any outstanding amounts should be agreed and signed in writing. Essentially, when someone loads money on a card, they are placing a deposit to be spent against which will either belong to the client or the caterer, depending on the structure of the contract. The overall cash balance that has not been spent, though held by the caterer or the client, does not belong to them. It is merely held until the customer requests a refund or spends it. This balance is called "cashless liability". If the cashless liability is with the incumbent caterer, they must take a balance of this value at the time of handover and issue a cheque to the new caterer so that the cash balances are still available for customers to use.

Further information

Please contact us if you need templates for:

- Termination letter for the outgoing caterer
- Letter of intent for the incoming caterer

Written by Francois Gautreaux, Managing Director.

5 ways bartlett mitchell powers your business

Great food, eaten in great surroundings, can make a huge difference to your business. It's our job to help you make the most of this, in five ways...

1. Attracting the best people

Today's employees expect more from their workplace, and the food you provide is a crucial part of that – especially as many people now care more about what they eat. We can help you enhance your 'employer brand' by creating a food and drink offer that sets you apart from other companies. You'll have a happier, healthier, more engaged workforce, and find it easier to recruit and retain the most talented people.

2. Improving productivity

Well-fed employees are more productive. In 2013, the Journal of Occupational & Environmental Medicine argued that employees who eat well are 25% more likely to perform better. And, of course, if there's an appealing restaurant or café in the workplace, they will stay on site. More importantly, taking lunch and coffee breaks with colleagues encourages interaction. People talk more freely, information flows more easily, and your business benefits.

3. Enhancing your reputation with customers

When customers and other guests visit, you want them to enjoy the experience and be impressed by your workplace. An appealing, well-run café, restaurant or executive dining facility, serving great food, says a lot about your business. We can ensure your food, drink and hospitality reflect your brand style and values, and uphold its reputation.

4. Providing return on investment

Every square foot of your business premises is highly valuable, and the space you dedicate to catering and hospitality has to work hard for you. We ensure these facilities work efficiently and cost-effectively, making best use of your resources. Also, choosing us to manage your food and drink services leaves you and your team free to focus on running all the other vital aspects of your business.

5. Collaboration

You want your business to have a positive impact on the environment and your community – and your customers, staff and shareholders want to know about it. We can boost your reputation as a responsible organisation through our strong track record in sustainability. Our achievements become your achievements. And inspiring stories – like our Perkee coffee sourced from a Fairtrade cooperative in Nicaragua – can be associated with your brand.

About bartlett mitchell

bartlett mitchell is a multi-award-winning contract caterer. Our experienced, energetic and enthusiastic team takes a fresh approach to food and drink – with delicious results for you and your business.

We've grown steadily to a team of over 1,000 experienced foodies, serving 45,000 customers every day in over 90 locations in the UK.

We're also a responsible company, and can help yours to be one, too. We were the first contract caterer to achieve the Sustainable Restaurant Association Three Star Champion Status, known as the Michelin stars of sustainability.



Fresh ideas every time

Because we're an entrepreneurial business, we don't have a one-size-fits-all template that we attempt to force on each client. Our catering focuses on tailor-made solutions using innovation. We take time to develop bespoke ideas to match the client culture, employees' tastes and the physical environment.

We also recognise the importance of value for money. We work as a tight, agile team to develop solutions that reduce costs and use resources more smartly.



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